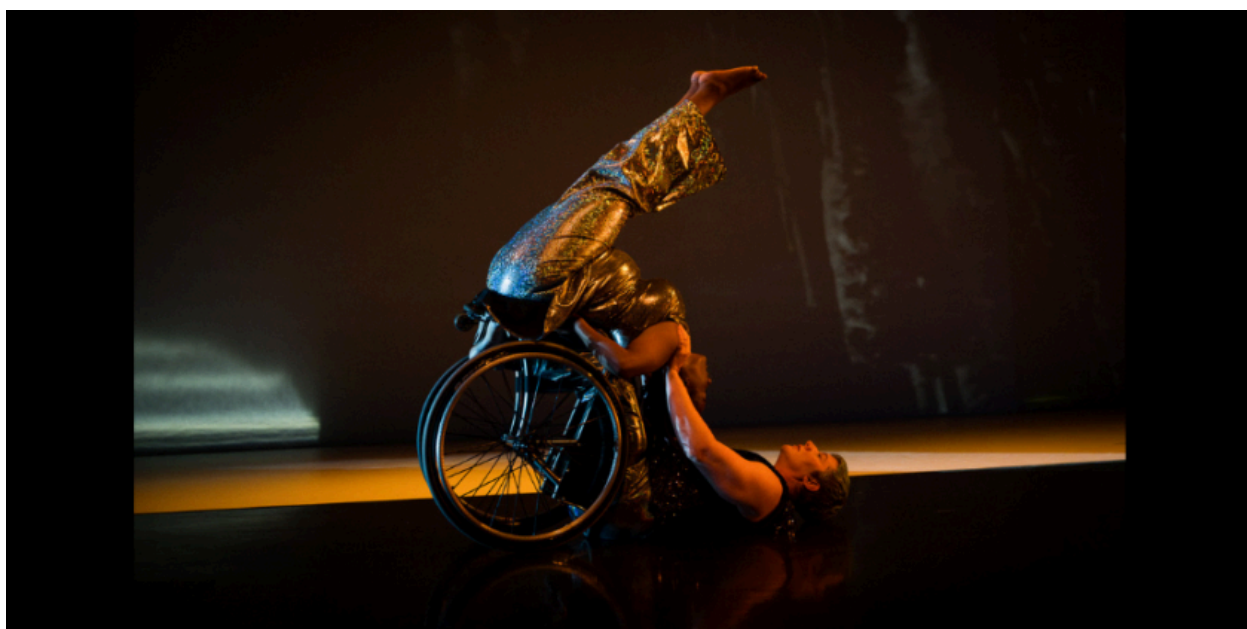




IMPRESSIONS: Kinetic Light in “The Next TiMes” at New York Live Arts



By Rush Johnston
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Kinetic Light in "The Next TiMes." Photo: Cherylynn Tsushim

Direction: Alice Sheppard
Choreography: Alice Sheppard and Laurel Lawson in collaboration with Tatiana Cholewa and Kayla Hamilton
Performers: Tatiana Cholewa, Kayla Hamilton, Laurel Lawson, Alice Sheppard
Composer/Sound Design: Josh Loar | Projection Design: Carlos Johns-Dávila, Katherine Freer
Lighting Designer: Annie Wiegand | Lighting Programmer/Assistant: Maryam Sweirki
Audience & Access Technology: Colin Clark, Laurel Lawson
Production Manager: Steve Zakszewski | Production Stage: Manager L. Weber
Production Design: Laurel Lawson
Audio Description Artists: Tatiana Cholewa, Kayla Hamilton, Laurel Lawson, Azure D. Osborne-Lee, Mo Pickering-Symes (using the Rationale Method), Leah Lakshmi

Piepzna-Samarasinha, Alice Sheppard

Audimance Soundscape: Alice Sheppard | Voice Actors Tatiana Chloewa, Kayla Hamilton, Rachel Hickman, Laurel Lawson, Alice Sheppard

Contributing Poet/AD Performer: Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha

October 9 - 11, 2025

Cover image: Laurel Lawson partners Kayla Hamilton as they lay with their back on the floor, hands holding Kayla's shoulders, and legs and wheels supporting Kayla's lower body. Kayla balances as she tucks her torso and lifts her hips and extended legs, making a diagonal line with her lower body. Laurel is a white person with very short hair wearing a black sleeveless top. Kayla is a thick bodied Black woman wearing a silver sleeveless top and matching pants.

Artists across disciplines have often asked us to consider the future. Are we to be part of a future that is cold, chrome, and robotic or one that is lush, green, and vibrant? This October the dance company [Kinetic Light](#) asked us to ponder posterity, and to consider what possibilities there are for us there.



Alice Sheppard and Tatiana Cholewa face off. Alice is balancing on super short crutches, legs bent and folded under herself, tops of her toes grazing the floor. Tati's legs are also bent and folded under, but Tati is a bit lower than Alice, with their hands planted on the ground. They peer at each other with curiosity and intensity. Alice is a multiracial Black woman with short curly hair, Tati is a white person with very short hair; they both wear silver pants and shimmering black tops. Photo: Cherylynn Tsushima

While the future that Kinetic Light has imagined is in some ways chrome and in some ways lush, it's also bigger than that. It's Black. It's Disabled. It's communal. In their world premiere *The Next TiMes*, Kinetic Light expands possibilities and takes us into an evening where access

becomes art and we become participants in building a new world.

Upon entry into [New York Live Arts'](#) lobby we are greeted by a support staff member and encouraged to interact with a tactile table that contains swatches of fabric from the performers costumes, a piece of marley flooring from the stage, and tinsel from large chrome hats that the dancers wear in the work. We then move to another table to check out a sensory kit which contains sunglasses, headphones, ear plugs, and lots of stim or stimulation toys for fidgeting and self-soothing during the performance. As we move into the theater, the air is inviting, beckoning us to find a seat and watch the performance unfold. This was one of the best pre-show experiences I've experienced, as both a frequent dance goer and a [neurodivergent](#) person. I commend Kinetic Light for turning access tools into art so thoughtfully and creatively. It made all the difference.



Four performers dressed in silver, with black caps, pause with their backs to the audience, three people in chairs and one standing. They gaze at four shimmering towers of silver fringe. Photo: Cherylynn Tsushima

The work opens with four dancers taking the stage, three in wheelchairs and one standing. The artists face away from us, upstage, towards four five-foot-tall objects with silver circular discs on their tops. Attached to each disc is floor-length tinsel, which creates a cylinder that the dancers can enter. As the dancers disappear inside the tinsel, the structures become hats that dance, as well as screens for projected images.

Projection, soundscape, inventive props, and mobility aids create a

symphonic landscape in which the dance comes alive. As the layers unfold, I began to make sense of the future Alice Sheppard and the dancers envision. A future that is accessible to all. A future that is as wonderful as it is messy, and one that is starting to seem possible.



The performers have disappeared into the silver towers which now wriggle, bounce, swirl, and shimmy — a flurry of fringe, feet, wheels, and mystery. The background swirls in purple, blue, and green. Photo: Cherylynn Tsushima

At intermission, I decided to explore the designated quiet space on the second floor. Books, soft lighting, coloring pages, and stim toys, as well as a muted livestream of the performance were broadcast on the wall. The space was perfect. I tend to get overwhelmed in theaters, especially when there is loud audio or intense lighting. This quiet space created a safe way to experience critical aspects of the performance without taking them away entirely. I loved the space so much I decided to stay in the quiet room for the second act. When I voiced concern to the attendant about missing out on the experience, they helped me connect my phone to [Audimance](#), a platform created by Alice Sheppard and choreographer and artist-engineer, Laurel Lawson, where I could access audio descriptions of the movement, the real time soundscape of the performance, or poetry by renowned disabled writer [Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha](#) that accompanied portions of the piece.



Alice Sheppard leans on her crutches as she balances on one bent leg while lifting the other high. She leans forward, also balancing a silver hoop on her neck and shoulders, as she looks in the direction of the lifted leg, a mischievous expression on her face. Alice is a multiracial Black woman with magenta curly hair; she wears silver pants and a dramatic vest of black feathers. Behind her, Tatiana Cholewa sits on the floor in a silver hoop, bending at the waist and folding their body in half. Tati is a white person with very short hair, they wear a silver sleeveless pantsuit. Behind them both is a large flowing orange planet in a starry sky. Photo: Cherylynn Tsushima

The poetry enhanced the work in ways I wouldn't have experienced in the theater. Kinetic Light's movement vocabulary explored repetition in motifs and dueling partnerships complete with stunning lifts and weight shares. Piepzna-Samarasinha's words underscored their greater message: a future of struggle but also a future of joy reminding us that there's still a party at the end of the world. This message was present not only in the dance but also in the environment and ambiance of the entire evening.

Recently [**The National Center for Choreography-Akron \(NCCAkrón\)**](#) announced that Kinetic Light choreographers **Alice Sheppard** and **Laurel Lawson** are the latest recipients of the \$50,000 Knight Choreography Prize. This prize honors a living choreographer or artist collaborative whose work is "distinguished not only for their artistry but also for their originality of thought and impact." After witnessing *The Next TiMes*, I can't help but agree that this prize is well deserved and look forward to seeing how Kinetic Light continues to shape the field in both art and access to dance.

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<https://www.dance-enthusiast.com/features/impressions-reviews/view/Kinetic-Light-The-Next-TiMes-New-York-Live-Arts>